United Nations E/CN.6/2007/NGO/35

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
17 January 2007

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-first session
26 February-9 March 2007
Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

Statement submitted by the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.

06-68752 (E) 190107

Statement

The International Federation of Women in Legal Careers (I.F.W.L.C.) is an international NGO founded in Paris in 1928, having consultative status with ECOSOC since 1961. It has affiliated national associations and individual members in 70 countries. The Federation's activities are inspired by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reaffirmed in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Federation's essential goals are the eradication of all discrimination against women and the promotion of Women's Human Rights.

I.F.W.L.C. assembled at its XIXth Congress in Barcelona, Spain, September 2006, considered the theme of discrimination as it affects both women and the girt-child, especially as it concerns their health, education and access to property. It concluded unanimously that violence against children has a direct deleterious impact on their education and their physical and mental health.

Genital Mutilation and Sexual Violence

I.F.W.L.C. considers both actual rape and the practices of child marriage an abhorrent form of sexual violence and, as such, should be criminalized. The Federation expresses deep distress over the traditional, customary practices against girls of Female Genital Mutilation or Excision, stressing that these practices are in themselves an act of violence against these girls and a violation of their fundamental right to life, security, freedom and health. It considers such practices a violation of Human Rights and demands a massive campaign of information and re-education in order to persuade parents not to submit their daughters to such practices.

Education of Girls

I.F.W.L.C. believes that families must be made aware that the education of young girls is one of the principal ways to emerge from poverty. Society must insure that girls, as well as boys, remain in school as long as possible so as to develop to their full potential. This will aid in the prevention of the pregnancy of minors, the incidence of disease and the prevalence of poverty. Educated girls are more employable and more aware of proper hygiene and knowledge of both the means of preventing unwanted pregnancies and the transmission of sexual diseases. Finally, education makes girls more adjusted to the demands of today's modern technological world.

Girls must be taught the importance of human rights and of the equality between men and women, and teacher-training should include these subjects. One essential requirement is that the schooling of girls be secular, mixed and obligatory (at least to age 16) and provided by teachers who are competent and well-trained to communicate their subjects; this includes an appreciation of the need to differentiate between the teaching of girls and boys.

Certain governmental policies are fundamental to the proper education of girls. Specific parts of the State Budget should be set aside for their education. Educational statistics should be broken down by gender in order to enhance the visibility of girls' education.

Health Care of Girls

The neglect of the appreciation of health care for girls is an indirect extension of violence, since it encroaches on the integrity of their female bodies. Civil society must provide, in some manner, funding for health care and health instruction at all levels of society, including public-funded campaigns addressing the prevention of disease, especially that of AIDS. General sex education should be mandatory in all schools. I.F.W.LC. encourages governments and other public entities of the world to include the teaching of the prevention of AIDS and general sexual information in their countries. Additionally, since the problem of AIDS is at an acute crisis level, the international community should find a way to criminally punish the behavior of those carriers of the disease who know they are infected and who continue to consort with their partners (legitimate or not). Also, the dissemination of misleading and incorrect AIDS information regarding its cure and/or prevention should be considered a criminal act and sanctioned as such.

It is obvious that the problem of violence against women and their children encompasses many elements that are major shortcomings of our society, and their alleviation is going to affect the general level of violence in our world.